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[Navy Medicine Actively Advocates Healthy Aging for All](#)

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By Douglas H Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton public affairs



As soon as we are born, the aging process immediately kicks in and by engaging in healthy habits from an early age as we grow older such as walking, hiking, running, then we stay away from a sluggish, sedentary lifestyle (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB Public Affairs).

Why is it that as we get older, even if we grudgingly accept the aging process, that sometimes staying healthy doesn't keep pace with our overall maturation progression.

Yet if we stop paying attention to our health, it will fade away. Then we follow. There's just got to be a better, easier way to go, right?

Sailors and Marines, retirees and family members still grow old despite the best efforts of Navy Medicine. There are annual medical examinations and dental checkups, pre- and post- deployment physicals administered and a host of health and wellness resources available.

As the old saying goes, 'old age ain't for sissies.' Neither is reaching those years that are 'old age.'

There's bound to be those who attest that they are not aging. Confidence is a wonderful thing, especially if it's used wisely. The stark truth is that a person immediately starts to age chronologically as soon as they are born. Just the way it is. Yet biologically, we all can do something with regards to how we look, feel, and act at our age.

There are those who are aging gracefully while some struggle with a host of health issues, many which are entirely preventable.

What gives?

The majority of us know that using tobacco products are a leading cause of statistics – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths per year in the United States, including an estimated 41,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure. This is approximately 1,300 deaths every day – so we'll hold off with the percentages and graphic descriptions of invasive cancers.

Most people also know that all things alcohol-related have to be handled in moderation. The 'Keep What You've Earned' campaign, developed by Sailors for Sailors, is but one example and an on-going theme to remind us of the perils of drinking. Additional resources, insight and information are available via the Navy's Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program.

The Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center is at the forefront in [providing prevention education](#), training insight and informational awareness on many questions and concerns about healthy aging.

Additionally, the CDC advocates that physical activity is crucial to staying healthy as we age.



Healthy Aging can mean flying your flag in the breeze, one mile at a time...(courtesy photo)

If we're not using, we're losing.

The CDC maintains that as we all get older, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent many of the health problems that seem to come with age. Muscle atrophy without use. A sedentary lifestyle equates to deterioration of not just physical well-being, but also impacts mental and emotional welfare.

If a person is active, whether it's walking, running, weight lifting, even performing lawn and garden chores/care, it helps muscles engage, bolster the cardiovascular system, and even assist with keeping the mind involved.

Not doing any physical activity can be bad for you, no matter your age or health condition. Lifting a liter of cola and a bag of chips does not count. Some physical activity is better than none at all. Anyone's health benefits – stronger heart, lower cholesterol, lessening the risk of diabetes – will also increase with physical activity.



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older such as walking, hiking, running, then we stay away from a sluggish, sedentary lifestyle (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB Public Affairs).

The CDC recommends [a few options to assist all of us as we age](#). Older adults should try to commit to approximately two and a half hours per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as brisk walking) to achieve important health benefits, as well as add muscle-strengthening activities several days a week to work on all major muscle group (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). Another possibility the CDC suggests is to log 1 hour and 15 minutes every week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity like running or taking in a spin class, along with muscle –strengthening activities for all major muscle groups. For even greater health benefits, increase the amount of time doing aerobic activity and strengthening exercises.

NHB's Health Promotion and Wellness is also assisting beneficiaries in the healthy aging process, offering "Eat Smart, Live Strong" four-week program for those 55 years and older.

"The program encourages eating more fruits and vegetables and participating in 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity most days of the week," said Trish Skinner, NHB Health Promotion Department Health Educator.

If there is any overall conviction involved here in the healthy aging process, it's to be active and engaged. Add in being savvy with nutritional habits, sleep pattern, dealing with stress, etc. and a person gives themselves a fighting chance to beat the clock. And speaking of the clock, there are 1,440 minutes in a day. Dedicating just 30 minutes of that total to being active is a small percentage that brings large benefits to helping ourselves.



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Lindsay Edwards of Naval Hospital Bremerton's Physical Therapy Department lends a hand, as well as a throwing arm, to help beneficiaries with healthy aging. The primary overarching duties of NHB's Physical Therapy department is to assist patients improve their mobility and function after surgery. (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB Public Affairs).

In August, Navy Medicine focused on the theme of 'Preventive Health,' which echoes many similarities when it comes to healthy aging principles. After all, who has time for such conditions as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes? The strategy to prevent these ailments can be implemented by most. Say a person wishes to shed a few pounds... by modifying current habits and the daily norm a person can start a routine that is centered around the overlapping formula of eating less and exercising more.

Obviously, for more indepth guidance, a person should contact their provider, schedule an appointment with their Military Treatment Facility Health and Wellness Department, and even the command fitness leader and/or dietitian. The resources are there for a reason.

High blood pressure? Cholesterol level not where it should be? Your favorite team not in the pennant race? Navy Medicine can help you with the first two.

For the third, there's always next season, and Navy Medicine wants you to stick around and enjoy it.

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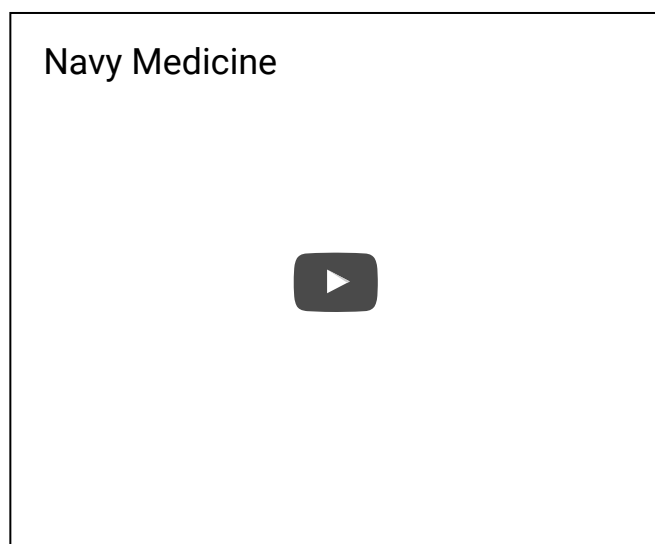
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